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School Reform News

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Teacher Union Accused of Tax Evasion

by George A. Clowes

Despite budgeting more than $70 million a year in recent years to maintain an ongoing nationwide organization of more than 1,800 paid political organizers and lobbyists, the National Education Association (NEA) since 1994 has reported to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) that it spends nothing on political activities.

Drawing on earlier complaints filed with the IRS and U.S. Department of Labor, Landmark Legal Foundation on September 8 formally called on the IRS and the U.S.

UNION continued on page 16

Using Statistics to Subvert NCLB

by Derek Redelman

The goals of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act are clear enough: Zero children left behind, with 100 percent proficiency in 12 years.

But while federal officials repeatedly affirm those goals, some states are undermining the clarity of the NCLB accountability framework by applying statisti-

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SRN SPECIAL REPORT

School Choice Gathers Momentum Worldwide

While U.S. inches forward, China takes a giant step

Getty

by Robert Holland

The concept of private choice as a public good in primary and secondary education is rapidly gaining favor worldwide, even in nations not exactly famed as champions of individual rights.

In September, while a handful of U.S. senators contemplated a filibuster of a voucher measure that would enable fewer than two thousand District of Columbia children to exit failing public schools in favor of productive private ones, the People's Republic of China was putting into effect a law giving private schools equal standing with state-owned schools.

The law went into effect during a forum on how to boost the growth of a private educational sector in China, held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. According to statistics prepared for the National People's Congress, some 54,000 private schools enrolling almost 7 million students had opened their doors in China by the end of 2000.

By assisting the private schools with loans, tax credits, and similar assistance, the government hopes to stimulate much more dramatic private school

MOMENTUM continued on page 4

1 in 3 Students Graduate College-Ready

"Every year about a million young people who should graduate from high school don't, condemning them to a lifetime of lower income and limited opportunities."

JAY P. GREENE AND GREG FORSTER
MANHATTAN INSTITUTE

by Krista Kafer

Only 70 percent of U.S. students enrolled in public high schools graduate, and only 32 percent graduate ready for college, according to a new analysis of U.S. Department of Education data by Manhattan Institute researchers Jay P. Greene and Greg Forster.

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A Rough Week for Public Schools and Teacher Unions in the Nation's Capital

by Don Soifer

After getting through Hurricane Isabel relatively unscathed, the nation's capital did not fare well at the beginning of October, at least as far as its schools were concerned.

On October 1, Senate leaders withdrew President George W. Bush's plan to create a new school voucher program for children in the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS). The move—expected to be only temporary—came with Members facing a heavy workload that included the President's request for Iraqi aid. The postponement acknowledged that leadership lacked the 60 votes necessary to overcome a filibuster threatened by Senate Democrats opposed to the bill.

Most observers viewed the development as only a passing setback, however. Some supporters of the voucher plan noted that, since it had already passed the House and enjoyed strong Bush administration support, roadblocks on the Senate floor could be overcome by maneuvering in conference committee.

"Without a Senate version of the scholarship bill," observed Representative Jeff Flake (R-Arizona), who authored the original DC voucher bill earlier this year, "the conference on the D.C. Appropriations bill has the potential to yield a much better bill with fewer compromises to render the legislation less effective. Clearly, President Bush feels strongly about this issue, and I'm quite confident that we can make D.C. school choice a reality."

District Drops Ball on Millions

Meanwhile, during the same week, two new developments underscored problems with the management of education funds by government units in the District of Columbia.

On September 30, the *Washington Times* reported the District was at risk of losing $23.8 million in federal education grants it had already been awarded. D.C. officials had failed to spend the money before the September 30 close of the fiscal year. In an interview with the newspaper, DCPS Chief Academic Officer Robert Rice seemed unaware of the situation or that the funds had even been made available. Most of grants were for professional development.

While city council and board of education officials squabbled publicly over who was at fault, U.S. Department of Education officials clarified they would permit the funds to carry into the following year.

Stealing $2.5 Million

During the first week of October, the ongoing scandal involving more than $2.5 million in missing Washington Teachers Union (WTU) dues deepened, with charges being filed against a D.C. Department of Health official for conspiracy to embezzle union dues. The District official, who had been given check-writing authority for the union, allegedly used a fictitious company and bank account to launder the funds.

Meanwhile, former WTU president Barbara Bullock and two other union staff members pleaded guilty to conspiracy, theft, and mail fraud charges. The offenses could result in Bullock serving 10 years in a federal prison. Her offenses included falsely inflating teacher dues by $144 apiece and stealing the increased revenues, according to prosecutors. The American Federation of Teachers has since taken over management of its local affiliate.

"Without a Senate version of the scholarship bill, the conference on the D.C. Appropriations bill has the potential to yield a much better bill with fewer compromises to render the legislation less effective. ... I'm quite confident that we can make D.C. school choice a reality."

JEFF FLAKE (R-ARIZONA)

Congressman Urges Accountability

Although not directly prompted by the DC teacher union problems, the House Employer-Employee Relations Subcommittee on October 2 approved three bills sponsored by its chairman, Representative Sam Johnson (R-Texas), that would raise the bar significantly on union accountability.

One measure would give the Department of Labor substantial new authority to enforce its union accountability regulations. Johnson pointed out that Labor Department data from 2002 indicated more than 40 percent of unions either filed their required disclosure forms late or did not file them at all.

Another measure approved by the subcommittee would empower the Secretary of Labor to bring civil suits on behalf of union members for failure to meet disclosure requirements, while protecting the identity of the members. A third proposal would require unions to disclose to their members information about their rights—including membership dues and membership rights—within 90 days of their joining the union.

The bills enjoyed bipartisan support in the Senate and are expected to proceed to the House floor in coming weeks.

Education Freedom Caucus

Representative Pete Hoekstra (R-Michigan), a longtime Congressional champion of school reform, in October announced the formation of a new Education Freedom Caucus. The caucus "is dedicated to a worthy and just goal—to allow parents to choose the best education settings for their children," according to Hoesktra.

Charter members include Representatives Jim DeMint (R-South Carolina), Trent Franks (R-Arizona), Marilyn Musgrave (R-Colorado), Mark Souder (R-Indiana), Tom Feeney (R-Florida), Jack Kingston (R-Georgia), and John Shadegg (R-Arizona). School vouchers, tuition tax credits, and charter schools were cited as important caucus priorities.

"The strongest and surest inducement to educational excellence," said Franks, "is to give parents the ability to choose what kind of educational substance and environment is best for their child"—ideals the new caucus hopes to champion in the coming months and years.

Don Soifer is executive vice president of the Lexington Institute. His email address is **soifer@lexingtoninstitute.org**.

Hoekstra's Heroes

Pete Hoekstra (R-MI)

Jim DeMint (R-SC)

Jack Kingston (R-GA)

Marilyn Musgrave (R-CO)

Trent Franks (R-AZ)

John Shadegg (R-AZ)

Tom Feeney (R-FL)

Mark Souder (R-IN)

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Momentum

Continued from page 1

growth to help meet China's huge educational needs.

"Although local governments ... have put a lot of cash into education, government-run schools can't meet the needs of the public due to the large population of China," reported the *China Daily* when the law was being drafted.

Voucher Petition in Taiwan

Meanwhile, across the straits in Taiwan, advocates of increased student choice were prominent at a National Conference on Education. Reformers presented President Chen Shui-bian a petition asking that the education ministry provide free-choice vouchers for all persons between the ages of 4 and 20.

"All students would be eligible for these vouchers," explained a representative of a grassroots education reform organization. "As long as you were a citizen, you would have a right to receive education vouchers."

The group contends the competition for students would elevate the quality of education in Taiwan.

Empowering Parents in Thailand

Vouchers also have entered the education policy debate in Thailand. Professor Kriengsak Chareonwongsak, education commission chairman of the government's think tank, has proposed a radical overhaul of school finance that would empower individual consumers instead of bureaucracy.

"Students would decide which schools they want to attend and then use the vouchers to pay the fees," Kriengsak told *The Nation* of Bangkok. His proposal comes as the kingdom's Ministry of Education is considering a way to provide for 12 years of "free" education.

Supporters of vouchers for Thailand argue choice would cause schools to raise their standards in order to compete for students, while motivating the empowered students to be more enthusiastic about their studies.

Vouchers for South Africa?

In post-apartheid South Africa, vouchers are being viewed as a way to reduce disparities between rich and poor.

"South Africa should embark on a school voucher experiment to improve the quality of education available to the poor," said Ann Bernstein, executive director of the Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE), in releasing a CDE study of successes in the U.S. with public and private voucher programs. The study was written by Boston University professor Charles Glenn, an authority on the international dimension of school choice. CDE is an independent policy research and advocacy organization based in Johannesburg.

In the portion of his study that cited Milwaukee's pioneering voucher experiment, Glenn quotes African-American activist Mikel Holt, editor of the *Milwaukee Community Journal*.

"What all of these parents and all of these children [supporting vouchers] have in common is that they are all part of what we call a civil rights movement. It's an educational civil rights movement ..." said Holt. "The civil rights movement my parents were involved in and I was involved in when I was a lot younger was to guarantee access. It was to get us to the lunch counter. The new civil rights agenda, since we're already at the lunch counter, is to make sure that our children can read the menu."

Following up on that comment, the CDE's Bernstein notes, "the similarities with South Africa are striking. South Africans have enjoyed a decade of political freedom, but far too many of us are still unable to 'read the menu.'"

Students read as they wait for recess at a school in China. Nearly 7 million Chinese students attend the country's 54,000 private schools. *Reuters*

"[S]ome 54,000 private schools enrolling almost 7 million students had opened their doors in China by the end of 2000."

She cites the following figures from the South Africa Department of Education:

- In Grade 3, the average reading and writing score is only 39 percent, and the average mathematics score is even lower, 30 percent;
- Close to 60 percent of pupils are reported to drop out before they graduate; and
- South Africa spends a higher percentage of its GDP on education than any other middle-income developing country.

Glenn notes that despite some major differences, there also are "striking similarities" in the way the education systems operate in the U.S. and in South Africa. In both, the middle classes—black and white alike—already choose the best school they can for their children, while many, if not most, poor black children have no choice but to attend low-quality schools. Both countries have private sectors with rich traditions of generous giving to social causes. But the U.S. stands apart with the rise of public-private partnerships to support voucher programs.

"Perhaps it is time for a similar coalition to begin creating school choice—and ultimately better lives—for poorer South Africans," Glenn concludes.

Policy Shift in Britain

Glenn's report on American voucher experiments also points out that almost all European countries, as well as Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, honor the principle that "parents have a right to ensure that their children receive an education consistent with their own values, and that government should make this possible ..."

In Britain, a vision of public-sector reform coming to the fore in the ruling Labor government soon may strengthen that commitment. London School of Economics professor Julian Le Grand, a newly appointed policy adviser to Prime Minister Tony Blair, advocates shifting away from the current policy model, which puts most power in the hands of providers, such as doctors and teachers, and little in the hands of consumers, such as patients and pupils.

In education, Le Grand wants to reverse that power equation by means of vouchers, with poor families receiving vouchers that have the highest cash value. With portable school funds like these, he argues, the better schools would have an incentive to accept greater numbers of poor students. A BBC economics analyst predicted Le Grand's appointment signals Blair "will not be distracted from his drive to transform the public services by the opposition of the unions and other Labor Party members."

Canada Looks at Educational Freedom

The Fraser Institute, a market-oriented think tank based in Vancouver, released its first-ever Canadian Education Freedom Index, comparing the 10 provinces on the degree of educational freedom they offer parents. The Index, modeled on an index for the 50 American states developed by Jay Greene of the Manhattan Institute, takes into account home schooling, private schools, and public charter schools.

Alberta ranks as the freest province, followed by British Columbia, Quebec, and Manitoba. Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland are the least free.

According to the Fraser Institute researchers, high academic achievement does not appear to be the result of small class sizes or high spending. Alberta, the educationally freest province, is also consistently the highest scorer academically. It also has the highest student/educator ratio in all of Canada, and it spends less per pupil than three other major provinces.

Robert Holland is a senior fellow at the Lexington Institute, a public policy think tank in Arlington, Virginia. His email address is **holland@lexingtoninstitute.org**.

INTERNET INFO

Links to two Chinese newspaper articles on private school developments are available online through the Fordham Foundation's *Education Gadfly* publication at **http://www.edexcellence.net/foundation/gadfly/issue.cfm?id=114#1437**.

The September 2003 study, *No Child Left Behind: Lessons from American School Voucher Programmes*, by Charles Glenn, is available for ordering through the Web site of the Centre for Development and Enterprise at **http://www.cde.org.za/contact.html**.

The Fraser Institute's September 2003 report, *The Canadian Education Freedom Index,* by the Institute's director of education policy, Claudia R. Hepburn, is available online at **http://www.fraserinstitute.ca/admin/books/files/ed-freedom.pdf**.

The 2003 edition of *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators* is available for ordering through the Web site of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development at **http://www.oecd.org**.

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Public School Apologists Slam Voucher Advocates

Report ignores liberal advocates of school vouchers

by David W. Kirkpatrick

A report from the anti-voucher organization People for the American Way (PFAW) claims supporters of school vouchers have an underlying agenda of privatizing U.S. K-12 education.

Yet this view is not shared either by the voucher-supporting organizations and individuals named in the report—who are labeled "a right-wing coalition"—or by the many left-of-center voucher supporters whose names are notably omitted from the report. In addition, one of the major privatization advocacy groups cited in the report is, like PFAW, opposed to vouchers.

In the July 2003 report from the PFAW Foundation, *The Voucher Veneer: The Deeper Agenda to Privatize Public Education*, the evidence for an underlying agenda consists of selected quotations, together with lists of individuals and organizations, suggesting guilt by association. The report, authored by PFAW President Ralph Neas, makes no serious attempt to prove an active association of this diverse group, or that those listed share anything beyond support for school vouchers as a reform strategy. While some favor privatizing public education, many included in the list do not share that view.

In fact, not all of the groups listed support vouchers, either. The "ultraconservative" organization the PFAW report features as an ardent advocate of privatization—the Alliance for the Separation of School and State—is in fact an ardent opponent of school vouchers, though for very different reasons than PFAW.

PFAW refers to the political views of voucher supporters as "far right" and "right wing." While many on the list would protest that label, the prominent voucher supporters PFAW left out of its report would protest even more vehemently.

For example, reference is made to Milwaukee and Cleveland, where voucher programs exist. Wisconsin State Representative Polly Williams is listed as a "former Milwaukee voucher advocate" even though she still is a voucher advocate. PFAW also neglects to mention that voucher advocates in Milwaukee include Mayor John Norquist and former school board member John Gardner. Also unmentioned are Cleveland voucher advocates Councilwoman Fannie Lewis, Mayor Michael White, and State Senator Patrick Sweeney, who represents Cleveland. The inclusion of these liberal Democrats—some quite far to the left—would have made PFAW's claim of a "right-wing" movement insupportable.

To these voucher supporters from the liberal Democrat side could now be added Washington, DC's Mayor Anthony Williams, DC School Board President Peggy Cooper Cafritz, and Education Committee Chairman Kevin Chavous.

Among voucher supporters is the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO), founded by Howard Fuller, a former Milwaukee public school superintendent. PFAW refers to BAEO as "one of the Trojan horses providing cover for the deeper agenda of privatization" of organizations such as the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, implying BAEO leaders and members can't think for themselves.

BAEO members include Pennsylvania State Representative Dwight Evans, who is the Democratic chairman of the state House Education Committee, and Floyd Flake, former Democratic Congressman from New York City. PFAW does not list these individuals as voucher supporters. To do so would have contradicted the "Far Right" label.

One notable feature of PFAW's list is that the organizations on it are ones that have been attacked by the National Education Association (NEA), the nation's largest teacher union. Indeed, PFAW is closely allied with the NEA and others in opposition to school vouchers. At the NEA's national conference a few years ago, the NEA presented an award to PFAW's founder.

One final piece of information the PFAW report does not mention is a survey the NEA itself sponsored in 2001, which found 63 percent of Americans favored tuition vouchers they could use to send their child to any public, private, or charter school. Support was even greater among low-income and minority parents, and was highest, 75 percent, among black parents under the age of 35.

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INTERNET INFO

The July 2003 study by Ralph G. Neas, *The Voucher Veneer: The Deeper Agenda to Privatize Public Education*, is available online at the Web site of People for the American Way at **http://www.pfaw.org/pfaw/dfiles/file_223.pdf**.

International Scorecard for U.S. Education: Big Spending, So-So Results

by Robert Holland

The latest international scorecard for education looks to be little changed in one respect: The United States continues to be at or very near the top in level of spending on education.

At the same time, the U.S. is falling in the international standings of student performance.

An annual review of education in the world's industrialized nations is conducted by the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The latest update, published in September, found the United States was virtually tied with South Korea for first place in the level of education spending. South Korea spent 7.1 percent of its gross domestic product on education; the U.S., 7.0 percent. The OECD average was 5.9 percent.

But while student achievement has been surging in South Korea, it has been sagging in the U.S. Ranked by the proportion of its population completing high school, South Korea has gone from 24th among OECD nations a generation ago to first place now. Meanwhile, the United States has dropped from first to ninth place.

Ranked by how well 15-year-olds do on reading, mathematics, and science tests, OECD pegged the U.S. almost exactly in the middle of the pack among 30 member-nations.

In addition, according to OECD's Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), the United States has one of the widest literacy disparities between privileged and underprivileged children. PISA revealed the performance gap in reading between students from affluent and low-income families was widest in Argentina, the United States, Chile, Israel, Portugal, Mexico, Peru, and Brazil. (See "U.S. Scores Still Mediocre on New International Test," *School Reform News*, March 2002.)

"The countries that spend more tend to be the countries that do better," Barry McGaw, OECD's education director, told the Associated Press. "But ... it's not a perfect relationship. There are countries which don't get the bang for the bucks. And the U.S. is one of them."

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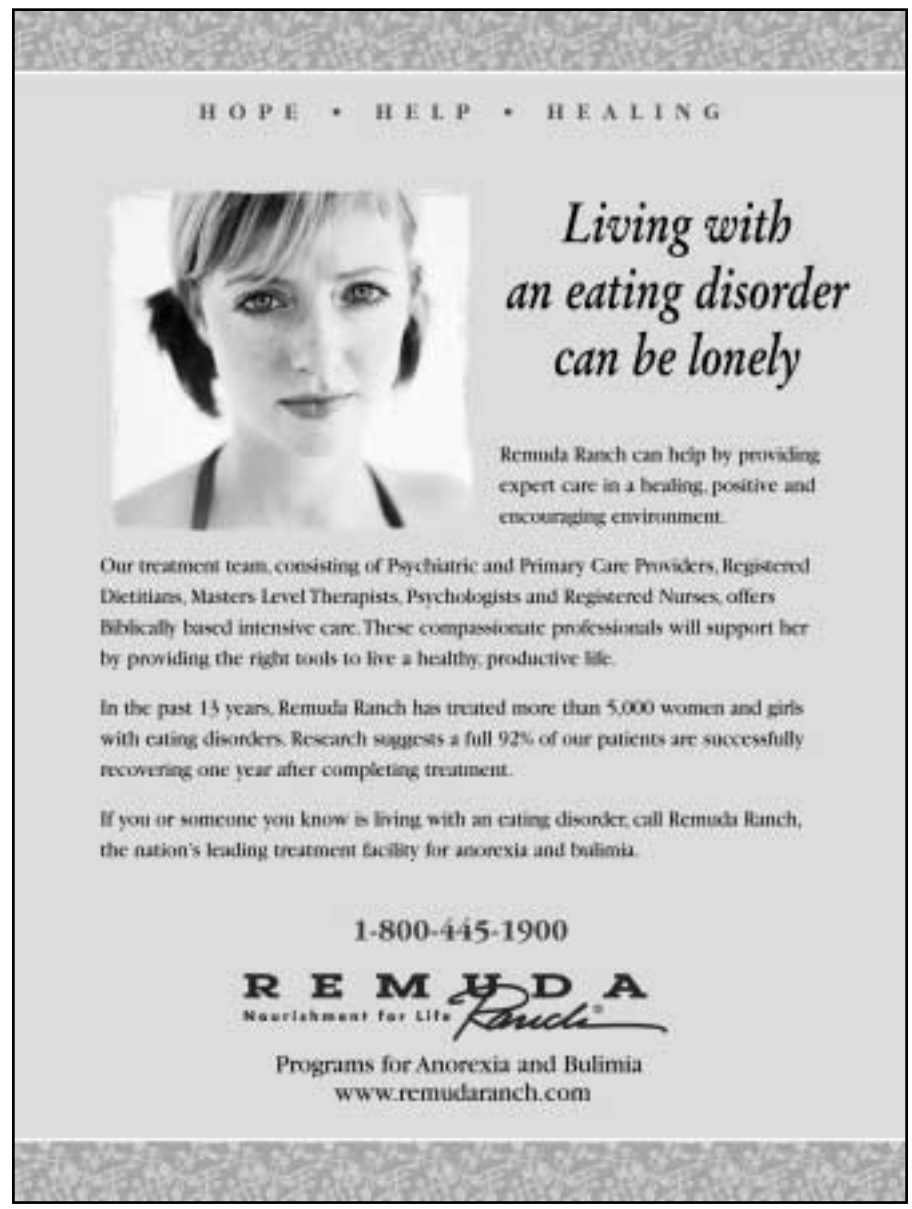
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NCLB

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cal tests that essentially say, "It all depends what you mean by zero, 100 percent, and any number in between."

Levels of Confidence

Perhaps the greatest challenge to the law's promises is emerging from the way states are using statistical tools to determine passing rates on state tests and reporting required benchmarks for Annual Yearly Progress. Ironically, by applying a higher level of "confidence," the passing rates being promised to the U.S. Department of Education are not in fact the benchmarks being enforced in many states.

In Indiana, for example, state education officials lauded two schools in the town of Marion for having shown sufficient improvement that they were removed this year from the "needs

"A recent review by the *Chicago Tribune* found 35 states are using some form of statistical manipulation to establish performance expectations that are lower than those being reported to federal officials."

improvement" list. But a quick review of the data reveals one of the schools, Center Elementary, had actually declined in performance—falling from 55 percent passing in 2001-2002 to 43 percent passing in 2002-2003.

To the average citizen, 43 is different from and less than 55; however, to a statistician, that judgement depends on the level of confidence attached to each number.

Indiana is far from alone in applying statistical qualifications to NCLB accountability reporting. A recent review by the *Chicago Tribune* found 35 states are using some form of statistical manipulation to establish performance expectations that are lower than those being reported to federal officials.

The primary culprit in these states is their focus on "margins of error" or "confidence intervals" that are being applied to state testing data. State officials argue such tools are necessary to help make certain schools are not punished for errors in the testing process or swings in individual student performances.

The practical outcome is that target performance levels, those reported to the U.S. Department of Education, are being lowered by amounts that depend on the size of each student group and the variability of test scores found in similar groups. Thus, for example, Indiana has determined from its own test data that only 40 percent of students in a group of 30 will be required to pass in order to satisfy the 60 percent pass rate promised to federal officials. In other words, 12 passing students will be counted as 18 in reports to federal officials.

The appropriateness of these actions is a subject for on-going debate among educators, statisticians, and other researchers. Most seem to agree state test results have some degree of variability that ought to be considered. Students performing at or near the state's passing level could move above or below that cut-off in multiple administrations of the test.

Concerns Already Addressed

But several safeguards are already being used by states to address those concerns. For example, states will not be required to consider small groups of students where such variability could have the greatest impact. For most states, that minimum group size is 30. Also, several states are using the averages of two or three years of testing data, another method that will smooth out random variability.

Some observers have also suggested the flexibility is being applied in the wrong place. If individual test scores are where variability occurs, then states ought to consider that when they set individual pass rates—not use that variability as a reason for lowering the number of students required to exceed the passing bar. Still others point out that using confidence limits is appropriate only for sampling data, not for hard counts like those used in determining pass rates.

The issue raised by confidence limits is best understood by thinking about a public opinion poll. Data from such polls are typically reported with specific margins of error. For example, a poll might indicate a 55 percent approval rating for the President, with a margin of error of plus or minus four percentage points.

The margin of error numbers are determined by a statistical measure called a standard deviation; typically, pollsters use a range of plus or minus two standard deviations to produce a 95 percent "confidence level" on their outcome. In other words, returning to the example, the pollster is telling us there is a 95 percent confidence level that repeated polls would show an approval rating between 51 and 59 percent (55, plus or minus four).

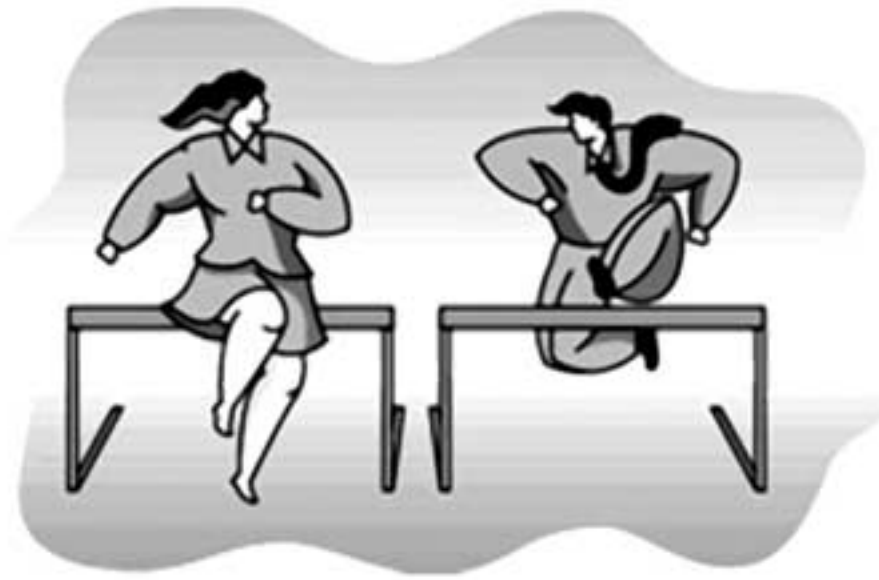
Using a range of plus or minus three standard deviations produces a higher confidence level—99 percent—but a wider margin of error. At a 99 percent confidence level, the Presidential poll would show an approval rating between 49 and 61 (55, plus or minus six).

The 99 percent level produces such a wide margin of error that it is almost never used—except, according to the *Chicago Tribune* survey, by 13 states in the development of their state accountability plans. Thus, while touting such lofty goals as "99 percent confidence" in their accuracy, these states have actually created such wide confidence intervals that schools like Marion Center Elementary, whose pass rates fell by 12 percentage points, can be labeled as "improving."

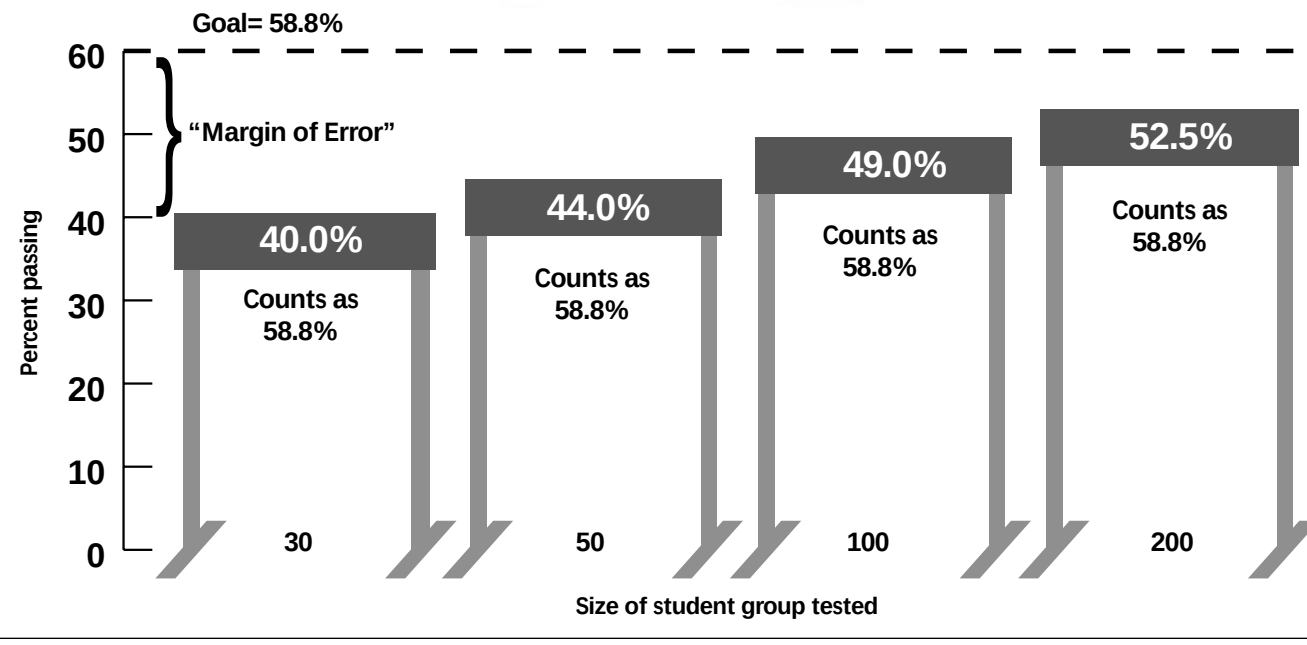
The actual margins of error created by each state's particular statistical treatment will depend on a range of factors that make it impossible to predict what actual pass rates will ultimately qualify as meeting the state's goal. But two things are certain: 100 percent will not mean 100 percent and "No Child" clearly will not mean no child.

Derek Redelman is director of education policy for the Indianapolis-based Hudson Institute, where he also is a senior fellow. His email address is **derek@hudson.org**.

"Margin of Error" Lowers Hurdle for Indiana Students



- 40.0% pass rate counts as 58.8% success rate for small groups in language arts.
- Bar is lowered significantly even for large groups.



Source: Indiana Department of Education

INTERNET INFO

Further explanation of statistics terminology, and a listing of books that provide a layman's introduction to statistics, are available at Robert Niles' Web page, under "Journalism Help: Statistics Every Writer Should Know," at **http://nilesonline.com/stats**.

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$5,000 Voucher Would Open Most School Doors

Enough to give parents clout, but less than public schools cost

by George A. Clowes

A new Cato Institute survey of private schools in six large- and mid-sized American cities reveals a large majority of private elementary schools charge $5,000 or less per student per year. Although most private secondary schools charged more than $5,000, in each city there were secondary schools that charged less.

The new findings are in line with figures reported by the National Center for Education Statistics, which indicate the average private school tuition in the U.S. in 1999-2000 was less than $5,000 for all schools ($4,689), less than $3,500 for elementary schools ($3,267), and more than $5,000 for secondary schools ($6,052).

"Since average per-pupil spending for public schools is now $8,830, most states could offer a voucher amount even greater than $5,000 and still realize substantial savings," said David F. Salisbury, director of the Cato Institute's Center for Educational Freedom.

"Even a poor child armed with a voucher of $5,000 could obtain a quality private education in any of the cities [covered in the survey]," he said.

Salisbury conducted the survey of private schools in Charleston, Denver, Houston, New Orleans, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC. The results are reported in "What Does a Voucher Buy? A Closer Look at Private Schools."

The survey shows there are many private school options already available to families who have $5,000 to spend on their child's education. For example, in New Orleans only 7 percent of elementary schools charged more than $5,000, and in Philadelphia only 11 percent charged more than $5,000.

"A voucher or tax credit of $5,000 or more per student would give families the clout they need as consumers," concluded Salisbury. "There are already many affordable high-quality private schools on the market, and, once they are allowed to compete on a level playing field with government schools, many more will come into operation."

Although private school seats may not at first be widely available, Salisbury points out school choice programs launch a dynamic process that results in the creation of additional private school options for students. Evidence from voucher programs in Milwaukee and Florida shows the number of private schools and the capacities of existing private schools both increase as school choice becomes more widespread.

George A. Clowes is managing editor of School Reform News. *His email address is* **clowes@heartland.org**.

Survey of Private School Tuition

City	Per-Pupil Spending: Public Schools	Median Tuition: Private Elementary Schools	Median Tuition: Private Secondary Schools
New Orleans	$5,797	$2,386	$3,895
Charleston, SC	$6,701	$3,153	$4,056
Houston	$7,089	$4,325	$6,150
Philadelphia	$8,303	$2,504	$4,310
Denver	$9,919	$3,528	$5,995
Washington, DC	$11,009	$4,500	$16,075*

* Median tuition in neighboring counties of Maryland and Virginia is $6,920 Source: Cato Institute

Is $7,500 Enough for a Voucher in DC?

by George A. Clowes

In explaining why she had just voted against the DC voucher plan in July, U.S. Senator Mary Landrieu (D-Louisiana) told a group of black parents the proposed $7,500 voucher wouldn't be enough to cover tuition at the private school where she sends her two children. With tuition at the school—Georgetown Day—set at $15,218 for elementary students and $21,327 for secondary students, Landrieu's statement was factually correct.

But a new survey conducted by David F. Salisbury of the Cato Institute shows there are 43 other private elementary schools in the District with tuition less than $7,500 per year, plus four high schools with tuition of $7,500 or less. While private high schools are particularly expensive in Washington, DC, the survey notes the median tuition at private high schools in neighboring counties in Maryland and Virginia is less than $7,500. Significantly, the voucher proposal for the District specifically excludes these neighboring lower-cost schools from the program.

This latter observation underscores a point emphasized by

DAVID F. SALISBURY

Salisbury in his report: Avoid placing regulations on private schools. While Salisbury's primary concern is with regulations "that would limit the diversity of standards, school practices, curricula, and educational philosophies that exists in the private school market," limiting parents' choices to private schools within the District also would have the effect of diluting the positive effects of competition.

George A. Clowes is managing editor of School Reform News. *His email address is* **clowes@heartland.org**.

INTERNET INFO

The August 2003 Cato *Policy Analysis* by David F. Salisbury, "What Does a Voucher Buy? A Closer Look at the Cost of Private Schools," is available from the Cato Institute Web site at **http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa486.pdf**.

Contact, enrollment, and other information about individual private schools in the United States may be obtained through the U.S. Department of Education's Private School Locator, which is available at the Web site of the National Center for Education Statistics **http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/privateschoolsearch**.

Estimates of private school tuition by level and type of school for 1999-2000, reported on page 3 of the Cato Institute report, are from Table 61 of the *Digest of Education Statistics, 2002*, which is available at the Web site of the National Center for Education Statistics at **http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2003/2003060b.pdf**.

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Graduate

Continued from page 1

For black and Hispanic students, the rates are even lower: Roughly half graduate, and fewer than 20 percent graduate with the skills and coursework required for college.

Until more minority students graduate college-ready, financial aid and affirmative action programs are unlikely to increase the number of minority students in college, conclude Greene and Forster in their September 2003 report, *Public High School Graduation and College Readiness Rates in the United States*.

"[B]y far the most important reason black and Hispanic students are underrepresented in college is the failure of the K-12 education system to prepare them for college, rather than insufficient financial aid or inadequate affirmative action policies," the authors conclude.

Students in the Midwest and Northeast have the highest graduation rates, while the South has the highest college readiness rate. The states with the highest graduation rates are North Dakota (89 percent), Utah (87 percent), Iowa (85 percent), South Dakota (85 percent), and West Virginia (84 percent). The states with the lowest rates of graduation are Florida and Georgia (56 percent), South Carolina (57 percent), Tennessee (60 percent), and Nevada (61 percent).

Other findings include:

- Only 51 percent of black students, 52 percent of Hispanic students, and 54 percent of American Indian students graduate;
- Only 20 percent of all black students, 16 percent of Hispanic students, and 14 percent of American Indian students leave high school college-ready;
- For white students and Asian students, graduation rates were 72 percent and 79 percent respectively;
- The college readiness rate was 37 percent for all white students and 38 percent for all Asian students.

A Leaking Pipeline

The disproportionately lower graduation and college-ready rates for minority students mean fewer such students attend college despite affirmative action and financial aid programs. To better understand how this process works, Greene and Forster suggest viewing the education system as a pipeline, with preschool and kindergarten students entering at one end and then flowing through to the other end, where they emerge as high school graduates prepared for college. Too many minority students "leak" out before reaching the end of the pipeline.

"Improving student financial aid or making affirmative action policies more aggressive is like opening the spigot at the end of the pipeline wider," Greene and Forster explain. "It has no effect on the flow of minority students into higher education because the problem isn't blockage at the end of the pipeline; it's leakage in the middle."

To be effective, Greene and Forster say, any strategy for increasing minority representation in higher education must focus on fixing the leaks in the nation's public school system, ensuring minority students graduate from high school with the skills needed to be ready for college.

Calculating Graduation Rates

The study employs the Greene Method pioneered by the author in earlier research. The method uses enrollment and diploma data from the Department of Education's Common Core of Data. The method compares the number of students who received their diplomas in 2001 to an estimate of the number who entered high school in 1997-98 and should have graduated in 2001. Calculations are made to account for population movement and for students who were held back in the 9th grade.

The Greene Method produces a lower graduation rate than the one calculated by the Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The NCES figure includes GED earners, while these are excluded by the Manhattan Institute study for two reasons: The future prospects of GED earners are similar to dropouts rather than diploma earners; and in fact GED earners are dropouts from the K-12 education system. The NCES also uses a different body of data that the authors consider less reliable.

Calculating College Readiness

To calculate college readiness, Greene and Forster use graduation rates, test scores from the Department of Education's National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and NAEP transcript research. They define college-ready using three measures:

- Students must have graduated from high school;
- Students must have scored at or above the "basic" level on the NAEP reading exam;
- Students must have taken the minimum core of high school classes prerequisite for college admission.

The "basic" level is the lowest level of achievement on NAEP exams. Students can score at the "advanced," "proficient," or "basic" levels. Those unable to meet the minimum threshold are considered "below basic."

The minimum core is four years of English, three years of math, and two years each of natural science, social science, and foreign language. That is the minimum high school transcript necessary to be admitted to the nation's least-selective four-year colleges or universities.

Only 32 percent of all students were found by Greene and Forster to be college-ready. It comes as little surprise that other research has found nearly a quarter of four-year university freshmen must enroll in remedial coursework.

Krista Kafer is senior policy analyst for education at The Heritage Foundation. Her email address is **krista.kafer@heritage.org**.

INTERNET INFO

The September 2003 study by Jay P. Greene and Greg Forster from the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, *Public High School Graduation and College Readiness Rates in the United States*, is available from the Institute's Web site at **http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/ewp_03.htm**.

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Competition among Schools Benefits All Students

by Herbert J. Walberg

Growing evidence shows introducing market forces into the education arena benefits all students by raising achievement across the board.

The federal No Child Left Behind Act introduces two key elements of competitive markets to K-12 education: the freedom to choose among schools, and access to schools' annual performance measures. The potential for improvement from these changes is suggested by what has happened since similar policies were introduced in Florida and the United Kingdom.

Florida A+

Under Florida's A+ Program, every public school receives an annual grade on its academic performance. If a school receives two F grades within a four-year period, parents may send their child to another higher-graded public school or to a private school. Recent reports show parents get more involved with their schools if they have information readily available on school performance.

For example, within weeks of learning in June that their school had received two consecutive F grades, more than 15 percent of the students at Jones High School in Orlando elected to leave. Two F ratings at Jean Ribault High School in Jacksonville caused a similar loss of students. Enrollments have dropped at all 28 F-rated schools in Miami-Dade County and at all seven F-rated schools in Orange County.

Although studies show the competition generated by the A+ Program has raised achievement levels in Florida's public schools, critics still express concerns about the most difficult-to-teach students accumulating in lower-performing schools, making those schools even worse. Evidence from the United Kingdom, however, indicates school choice produces an upward shift in achievement even in low-performing schools with high concentrations of low-income students.

Market Forces in the U.K.

In 1988, the Education Reform Act was passed to introduce "quasi-market forces" to public education in the United Kingdom. The reforms gave parents more choice over selecting their children's schools; made school funding dependent on student enrollment; and gave individual schools more authority over deploying resources.

In addition, each school's academic performance on national examinations was ranked annually in widely published *School Performance Tables*. As Lancaster University economists Steve Bradley and Jim Taylor note in a recent report from the Adam Smith Institute, "exam performance is one of the critical variables determining school choice and is therefore used by parents as a key performance indicator."

"Evidence from the United Kingdom ... indicates school choice produces an upward shift in achievement even in low-performing schools with high concentrations of low-income students."

To assess the effect of the 1988 reforms, Bradley and Taylor analyzed data for 3,000 public schools from 1992 to 2000. They concluded the reforms had created a "rudimentary" market in education, with the resulting competition among schools producing the following effects: Parents, seeking higher quality, moved their children to local schools with higher performance rankings; and academic performance levels increased across the board as schools vied to outperform one another to gain parental approval. Achievement for students from all social levels (including poor students) increased significantly over the eight-year period.

The Florida and U.K. experiences corroborate other studies showing the benefits of implementing market reforms in public schools. Markets appear to be just what our education system needs to promote effectiveness and efficiency.

Herbert J. Walberg is a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution; a member of Hoover's Koret Task Force on K-12 Education; University Scholar and research professor emeritus of education and psychology at the University of Illinois at Chicago; and chairman of The Heartland Institute. This article was first published by the Hoover Institution as a Hoover Essay and is reprinted here with permission.

Students Benefit When Schools Compete

Florida

In a recent study of Florida's A+ Program, Manhattan Institute scholars Jay P. Greene and Marcus A. Winters found that the greater the competitive pressure public schools faced from vouchers, the more the schools improved student achievement. (See "When Schools Compete, Good Things Happen," *School Reform News*, October 2003.)

The amount of competitive pressure faced by a Florida public school depends on how close it is to getting two failing grades from the state. When that occurs, students at the school may use vouchers to transfer to other schools. Greene and Winters placed schools into five groups to reflect how close each school was to facing competition from vouchers:

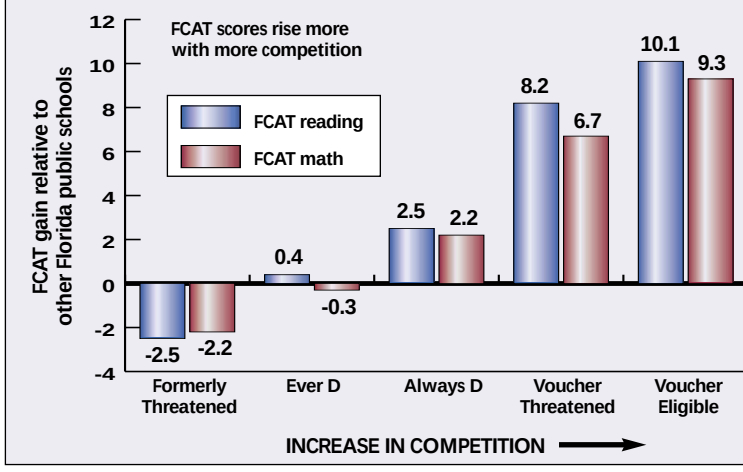
- In "voucher eligible" schools, students already were receiving vouchers; in such schools, scores on the state's FCAT reading test averaged 10.1 scale points above the average gain for all schools;
- Competition was next highest in "voucher threatened" schools, where one more F would make them voucher-eligible; FCAT reading gains in these schools averaged 8.2 scale points above average;
- In "always D" schools—with lots of Ds but no immediate voucher threat—FCAT reading gains were 2.5 scale points above average;
- In "ever D" schools—schools with just one D and thus at little risk of facing voucher competition—FCAT reading gains were average;
- In "formerly threatened" schools, which last received an F at least four years earlier, FCAT reading gains were 2.5 scale points below average.

United Kingdom

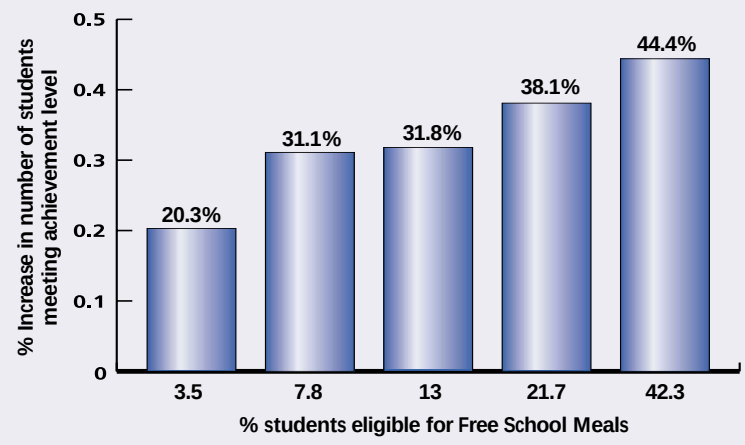
In a study of school performance in the United Kingdom since "quasi-market" reforms were instituted in 1988, Lancaster University economists Steve Bradley and Jim Taylor report competition has benefited all students, including those from low-income families. (See accompanying article, "Competition among Schools Benefits All Students.") The researchers analyzed data for 3,000 public schools from 1992 to 2000, breaking schools into five "poverty" groups based on the percentage of students eligible for free school meals.

Schools in all groups showed a significant increase in student achievement over the eight years of the study. However, the percentage increase in the number of students reaching the achievement level was greatest in high-poverty schools and smallest—though still substantial—in low-poverty schools.

When Vouchers Loom, Public Schools Improve



Competition in U.K. Benefits All Students



INTERNET INFO

A copy of the Manhattan Institute study, "When Schools Compete: The Effects of Vouchers on Florida Public School Achievement," is available online at **http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/ewp_02.htm**.

A copy of the Adam Smith Institute study, "The Report Card on Competition in Schools," is available online at **http://www.adamsmith.org/pdf/bradley-taylor-final.pdf**.

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The Friedman Report

The Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization established in 1996 by Milton and Rose Friedman. The origins of the foundation lie in the Friedmans' long-standing concern about the serious deficiencies in America's elementary and secondary public schools. The best way to improve the quality of education, they believe, is to enable all parents to have a truly free choice of the schools their children attend. The Friedman Foundation works to build upon this vision, clarify its meaning to the general public, and amplify the national call for true education reform through school choice. Contact us at **http://www.friedmanfoundation.org** for more information.

The Milton & Rose D. Friedman Foundation
One American Square #1760
Indianapolis, IN 46282

Mayor Anthony Williams: Crossing Party Lines for the Children of Washington, DC

by Laura J. Swartley

District of Columbia Mayor Anthony Williams stunned his fellow Democrats and voucher proponents when he voiced his support for a voucher program in the nation's capital this past Spring.

"The most powerful point I want to make in favor of supporting the voucher initiative is that, yes, you've got to try something different; and, too, all the impassioned pleas of how it doesn't work are based on about as much good information as there is from those saying it will work," Williams told a crowd of mostly conservative state legislators at the American Legislative Exchange Council's (ALEC) annual meeting July 30.

"Let's do it in such a way that for the first time, we track the outcomes of students in the private parochial schools and the charter schools and the public schools. ... We'll know after four or five years where we actually do stand," he said, alluding to the accountability measures mandated in the DC proposal.

"I suspect what we're going to find is that, one, it's going to promote change in the public schools. Two, we're going to find out that the public schools are actually better off after we did this than before. That's what they found in Milwaukee, and I believe that the same will prevail here."

The DC voucher proposal passed the Senate Appropriations Committee and the U.S. House of Representatives in early September. The full Senate has yet to vote on the issue.

Williams supports the measure because he believes sincerely, "We've got to try something new. The danger of trying something new, to me, is really not that grave. That's how far behind we are."

Williams' leap of faith is indicative of a beginning shift in Democrat opinion on market-based education reform. California Senator Dianne Feinstein, another recent convert who says she will vote for DC vouchers in the Senate, believes partisan bickering is eroding the possibility of true education reform. She is willing to try something new, in the form of an idea that developed from people with differing political views on other issues.

"We can't agree on all things," Williams told the ALEC crowd. "I'm sure we don't agree on some domestic issues—perhaps affirmative action ... The point is, I believe in the marketplace of ideas. I believe in the free exchange of ideas. I welcome you here and open up the door to new ways of thinking. New approaches. We need that."

Laura J. Swartley is communications director with the Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation in Indianapolis, Indiana.

The Voucher Plan for the District of Columbia

The plan is part of a $40 million amendment to the District of Columbia's 2004 budget, allocating $13 million for vouchers, $13 million for the DC Public Schools, $13 million for DC charter schools, and $1 million for program administration. The voucher program is called the D.C. Student Opportunity Scholarship Act of 2003, and it would work as follows:

Eligibility
Students would be eligible to participate in the program if they attend one of the city's worst-performing K-12 schools and if their family income is less than 185 percent of the federally established poverty level. For a family of four, that income cap would be about $34,040 a year.

Value
The voucher would be worth up to $7,500 per school year—about 69 percent of per-pupil spending in the city's public schools—and would apply to tuition, fees, and transportation.

Numbers
Up to 2,000 students per year could participate in the program. If the program is oversubscribed, participants would be chosen by lottery.

Choice Schools
Students could use the voucher at any participating private school in the District, religious or secular.

School Choice Roundup

by George A. Clowes

ARIZONA

U.S. Supreme Court to Review Tax Credit Case

In an unexpected move, the U.S. Supreme Court has granted review in the Arizona tax credit case. A decision is expected by June 2004.

Opponents of Arizona's 1997 income tax credit law didn't give up fighting the law when they lost in the state courts with the Arizona Supreme Court's 1999 ruling in *Kotterman v. Killian*. Instead, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), which objects to the tax credit being applied towards tuition at a religious school, filed a follow-up suit on First Amendment grounds in federal court. The credits total about $28 million a year.

Arizona filed a motion to dismiss the case under the Tax Injunction Act, which forbids lawsuits challenging taxes in federal court if they can be challenged in state court. Since the issue already had been challenged in tax court, the district court dismissed the ACLU lawsuit, but that decision was overturned by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

Earlier this year, the Ninth Circuit Court rejected arguments from Arizona that the federal courts have no authority in state tax matters, and decided federal judges have jurisdiction to declare a state tax statute unconstitutional. Some 25 states and Guam have joined the case to support Arizona's view that this is a state jurisdictional matter.

"The Ninth Circuit is notorious for its disgraceful and repeated usurpation and total disregard for the law as it is written," U.S. Rep. Trent Franks (R-Arizona) told the *Arizona Republic*. Franks was instrumental in creating the tax credit program and believes the U.S. Supreme Court "will overturn this Ninth Circuit recklessness."

Institute for Justice
October 1, 2003
Arizona Republic
October 2, 2003

COLORADO

More than 300 Private Schools Apply

By an October 1 deadline, at least 340 private schools had applied to participate in Colorado's new voucher program, which is being implemented in 11 school districts in the state. The Denver Public Schools (DPS) saw the largest number of applications—81—with Aurora Public Schools receiving 55 and Northglenn-Thornton receiving 43. On October 2, Denver school board members approved the first two applications and will review the other 79 in early November.

DPS superintendent Jerry Wartgow won praise from the editors of *The Rocky Mountain News* for how much he had managed to achieve in his first two years on the job. In particular, they noted how he and the school board had embraced the idea of meeting public demand for quality neighborhood schools and school choice.

"Under Wartgow," the editors wrote approvingly, "... there's been no more whining from the Denver district about vouchers. The superintendent's attitude is straightforward and sensible: If the district does a good job in creating first-rate neighborhood schools, it'll have nothing to fear from private-school competition."

School choice also was embraced by all eight candi-

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dates vying for one of four open seats on the Poudre School District Board of Education at a candidate forum in early October. Although vouchers received a mixed response, candidate Perry Lorenz said they are a natural extension of school choice and would be helpful in relieving overcrowding in public schools.

Rocky Mountain News
October 2-3, 2003
The Coloradoan
October 2, 2003

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Teacher Union Chief Supports Vouchers

During a recent interview with *Washington Monthly* writer Siobhan Gorman, National Education Association President Reg Weaver was criticizing President George W. Bush's voucher plan for Washington, DC on the grounds it would help only a limited number of students.

Since she regarded that argument as rather perverse—i.e., if vouchers can't help everyone, no one should get them—Gorman called Weaver's bluff and asked if he would support vouchers if every student in the District of Columbia had access to one.

"If they would give [all] 67,000 students a voucher, yeah," was Weaver's startling reply.

Washington Monthly
September 2003

FLORIDA

Judge Asked to Halt Voucher Program

The use of Florida's voucher law should be halted because the state isn't complying with the conditions established in August 2002 by Circuit Judge Kevin Davey, argued a lawyer for voucher opponents in a motion filed on October 1.

Davey had ruled last year that the 1999 law violated the state constitution by spending tax dollars on religious institutions. However, he said the program could continue if the state set aside funds to reimburse the public schools from which students transferred to private schools.

During the first three years of the program, only a few students at two Pensacola schools were eligible for vouchers. In 2002, the number jumped to about 9,000 and further increased to 13,700 this year. However, only 631 of the eligible students actually use vouchers. Although the state set aside $2.5 million in 2002, and added another $350,000 to the fund this year to bring the total up to $2.8 million, attorney Ronald Meyer argues the state should set aside $2.8 million this year in addition to the $2.5 million last year.

The state Department of Education believes its interpretation of Davey's condition is correct, according to department spokesperson Frances Marine.

Naples Daily News
October 2, 2003

MONTANA

"Why Do Some Families Want Vouchers?"

When Eric Feaver, president of Montana's largest teacher union, penned a guest editorial in *The Billings Gazette* to urge the state's Congressional delegation to reject the voucher plan for Washington, DC, he argued not only that voucher schools had ongoing problems with waste, fraud, and abuse of public funds but also that voucher schools cherry-picked their students, didn't have to meet a range of state regulations, weren't required to have quality teachers, and at best were "not significantly competitive with public schools."

That was too much for Billings resident Danielle Emery, who responded with what the newspaper called an "erudite rebuttal." For Feaver to imply that private schools provide a poor quality education is "breathtakingly disingenuous," wrote Emery.

"Around here," she continued, "'voucher schools' go by other names—Billings Catholic Schools, Trinity Lutheran School, Billings Educational Academy and Billings Christian School. It's hard to believe that Central [Catholic] High School is inferior when over 90 percent of its graduates are college-bound. In addition, there is a very strong network of home educators both here and nationwide, and those kids win the spelling bees, geography bees and science fairs in disproportionate numbers."

The real problem, argued Emery, is "Why do some families want vouchers? Parents want accountability and responsiveness from all educational systems. In private schools, they get what they want or they vote with their feet ... Baseless attacks on the quality of private education will not help address the problems facing public education."

The Billings Gazette
September 2, 2003
September 7, 2003

NEW JERSEY

Camden Again Calls for Vouchers

The Camden City Council voted 5-1 on September 11 to ask the state of New Jersey to allow children eligible for transfers under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act to transfer to a public school outside the district or to a private school. Last year, the council unanimously passed a resolution asking the governor and legislature to make a school voucher program available to families with children in the city's public schools. (See "Camden Is First to Call for Vouchers," *School Reform News*, September 2002.)

Students at 13 Camden schools are eligible to transfer to other schools because the schools failed to meet NCLB standards. Students at three Camden schools designated as "persistently dangerous" also are eligible to transfer out. But students at East Camden Middle School—which is designated both failing and dangerous—are out of luck because all four other middle schools in the district are failing, too.

"We need to try something else, because we can't lose our children," Camden resident Lonnie Hicks told the *Courier-Post*.

But Camden Education Association President Claraliene Gordon opposed the voucher program, saying those who support such a move just want children to abandon the public schools in Camden.

"There are no dangerous schools in Camden," insisted the teacher union president. "The schools in Camden are the safest habitat for the kids."

According to the *Courier-Post*, the district reported 1,269 violent incidents in 2001-02 and is "the largest, poorest and most violent school district in New Jersey." A few days after the council's vote, the newspaper's editors endorsed the voucher proposal, saying parents shouldn't be asked over and over again to wait until Camden slowly improved.

"If their children can get a good education in another school or district, they should be allowed to do so," declared the *Courier-Post* editors.

Camden Courier-Post
September 12, 2003
September 15, 2003

UTAH

Tax Credits Proposed to Cope with Enrollment

With Utah's school enrollment expected to swell by an estimated 100,000 students over the next decade and overwhelm the state's tax base, state Rep. Jim Ferrin (R-Orem) recently offered a proposal for relieving some of the pressure that would place on public schools: Provide an income tax credit for parents whose children are enrolled in private schools. Ferrin plans to sponsor a tax credit bill in the 2004 legislative session.

"Tax credits are the cheapest way to finance the education of students," Ferrin told *The Salt Lake Tribune* in September.

Since it's likely the value of a tax credit would be set at less than the value of the state funding per pupil—currently $2,132—a child educated in a private school using a credit would cost the state less than having the child educated in a public school. However, opponents claim tax credits and vouchers take public funds away from public schools.

A few days after Ferrin's announcement, Salt Lake City lawyer Maxwell A. Miller noted he had made a similar proposal to then-Governor Norm Bangerter and a legislative committee 15 years earlier when he was in the Utah attorney general's office. To address the education crisis the state would face, he had argued for "empowering the opt outs" with a voucher or tax credit and thus reducing the costs to public schools.

"My proposal went over like a lead turkey," he said, and "the crisis is here, staring us in the face."

Salt Lake Tribune
September 25, 2003
September 28, 2003

WISCONSIN

Assembly Approves Voucher Expansion

On October 1, the Wisconsin State Assembly approved a school choice bill to make three major changes to the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, which enables children from low-income families in Milwaukee to attend private schools with a state-funded voucher paying for tuition. The changes would:

- Dispense with the participation cap, which currently limits the number of voucher students to 15 percent of the enrollment in the Milwaukee Public Schools, or about 15,000 students;
- Permit students to remain in the program even if their family income increases above the maximum allowed for initial enrollment;
- Allow private schools outside the City of Milwaukee and in Milwaukee County to participate in the program.

If the bill is also approved by the Senate, it will go to Gov. Jim Doyle for signature. Doyle vetoed a voucher expansion plan that was part of a budget package sent to him in the Spring, saying he would rather see the voucher proposals as separate bills. Now that lawmakers have done so, Doyle told the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*, "Now is not the time to be expanding choice."

A choice-related bill that will soon be on the governor's desk is a plan approved by both Assembly and Senate to conduct a long-term evaluation of Milwaukee's voucher program, using standardized test data, graduation rates, and other indicators of academic achievement. Although the analysis would be designed and conducted by the state's Legislative Audit Bureau, the project would be privately funded.

It is not clear if Doyle will sign the bill, since he dislikes a provision that allows choice schools to opt out of the testing.

Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel
October 1-2 , 2003

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Internet Reshapes Outlook for Rural Schools

Virtual classroom redefines idea of "neighborhood"

by George A. Clowes

"The influence of geographic factors diminishes as technology grows," wrote Will and Ariel Durant in their 1968 book, *The Lessons of History*. Even these eminent historians could hardly have imagined how the Internet and high-speed telecommunications would so vividly illustrate the truth of their observation—transforming the opportunities available to children in rural America by putting them in virtual schools with classmates from a statewide neighborhood.

During a recent virtual town hall meeting hosted by U.S. Education Secretary Rod Paige, high school math teacher Brad Benton in Manning, Iowa explained how one of the unforeseen benefits of teaching a virtual calculus class over the Iowa Communications Network was the connections among the schools. Although students in the virtual classroom were sitting in schools all across the state of Iowa, he said, it was almost as if they were sitting at arm's length from each other.

"The perk that we didn't foresee is the dialog we get between the schools that we teach to," said Benton. He related how, over his six years of teaching calculus in distance learning mode, he had seen students get to know their virtual classmates and develop a network of friends in rural communities all across the state.

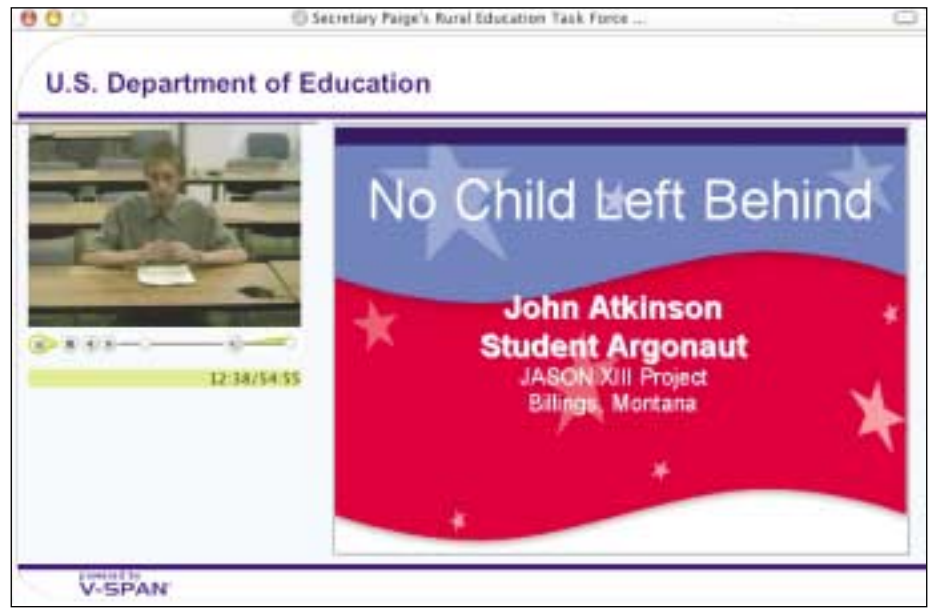
"Because of the smart use of technology and good ideas, you can make a state into a neighborhood, and, frankly, make a nation into a neighborhood."

GENE HICKOK, ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Acting Deputy Secretary of Education Gene Hickok, who moderated the virtual town hall meeting, said the Manning story shows how technology is not only transforming the process of teaching and learning but also creating new neighborhoods.

"Because of the smart use of technology and good ideas," said Hickok, "you can make a state into a neighborhood, and, frankly, make a nation into a neighborhood."

All 374 school districts in Iowa are part of the Iowa Communications Network (ICN), a fiber optic network established in the early 1990s. ICN supports two-way audio and full-motion video-conferencing at 750 sites across the state. Although Manning Community Schools has only 500 students in K-12, the distance learning capabilities of ICN allow the district to teach classes like Spanish and calculus cost-effectively by adding students from other schools across the state to Manning's virtual classrooms.



Saving Rural Schools

Rural schools often are pressured to be consolidated with another school or district. What options are available to parents who want to maintain the presence of a local school in a rural community?

Susan Hollins of Grantham, New Hampshire, who recently formed an organization called the School Reform Alliance for Rural States, addressed that issue in a workshop at the July 2003 EDVentures Conference of the Education Industry Association in Boston. The main messages coming out of the workshop were:

- Use the Internet for virtual classes.
- Convert the school to a charter school with the help of a federal charter school start-up grant.
- Keep in mind that the closing of a local school means loss of a community center and a sense of community purpose.

One workshop participant, Alan J. Carter, Jr. from Virginia, related how the citizens of Virgilina, Virginia had been fighting for years to keep their local elementary school open as enrollments dropped to around 120. After the Halifax County School Board voted to close the school in July, four Virgilina residents, including mayor John Youngk, protested the closing and tried to block the removal of equipment from the school. All four were arrested for disorderly conduct.

INTERNET INFO

Rural Education Task Force: **http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ods/ruraled/index.html**

Virtual Town Hall Meeting Webcast: **http://www.visualwebcaster.com/event.asp?id=17351**

The Montana JASON Project: **http://www.jason.org**

Iowa Communications Network: **http://www.icn.state.ia.us**

Manning Community Schools: **http://www.manning.k12.ia.us**

New Mexico IT and Reading: **http://www.sde.state.nm.us**

Wagon Mound Public Schools: **http://www.rec4.com/wagonmound.htm**

West Virginia Virtual School: **http://www.virtualschool.k12.wv.us**

As well as giving students the opportunity to take classes not offered at their local schools, ICN also broadens the curriculum offerings with statewide efforts such as the Science Coop Project, whose aim is to bring science expertise to the schools. Now in its fourth year, the project involves 28 Iowa schools and 20,000 students spread out over 40,000 square miles.

While ICN provides students with access to high-quality teachers, it also provides teachers with access to professional development. Courses for teachers are delivered over the network and a number of teachers are pursuing master's degrees online through the University of Missouri at St. Louis.

"This is just the beginning of our distance learning," said Congressman Steve King (R-Iowa), who also participated in the town meeting.

Rural Education Task Force

The virtual town meeting, which took place on September 25, was held to illustrate how rural communities are using technology to meet the goals of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. The law's requirement for teachers to be "highly qualified" in subject matter is particularly challenging for rural communities, where teachers often are providing instruction in multiple subjects across several grade levels.

Although much of the emphasis for school reform has focused on the problems of urban school systems, 43 percent of the nation's public schools are in rural communities, and nearly one-third of America's school-aged children attend public schools in rural communities. Secretary Paige has formed a Rural Education Task Force to identify the challenges faced by rural communities and to recommend solutions.

During the hour-long virtual town meeting, which was broadcast live over the Internet, educators from Iowa, Montana, New Mexico, and West Virginia showcased solutions they have developed for their rural communities.

Montana JASON

Susan Byorth, program manager for the Montana JASON project, spoke from Bozeman, Montana. She emphasized that the provision of technology alone was not enough, pointing out that the video-conferencing equipment in many Montana schools had been "gathering dust" until the JASON project came along to make efficient use of it as part of an online science and math curriculum. Connected from Billings, student John Atkinson told of his experiences in Alaska with the JASON project.

New Mexico DIBELS

From New Mexico, educators from the Wagon Mound Public Schools showed how they were using handheld computer devices to collect assessment data for tracking student progress in reading. With the DIBELS technology, they get prompt feedback on reading performance and thus are able to adjust their instructional strategies on a timely basis.

West Virginia Virtual School

Speaking from Wayne Middle School in West Virginia, Donna Miller described the rapid growth of the West Virginia Virtual School (WVVS), of which she is the coordinator. Established in 2000 with the primary aim of providing course options for underserved students in rural areas of the state, the WVVS now provides 115 courses to more than 1,200 students.

"Many of these students are from the most rural areas in West Virginia, where advanced placement, higher math, physics, and foreign language courses would otherwise not be available," said Miller.

The courses are delivered by a variety of contract providers, who supply not only instructional materials but access to qualified teachers.

According to Miller, the virtual school provides multiple benefits to rural communities: equitable access to courses, high-quality courses, high-quality teachers, and better learning opportunities for West Virginia students.

Hickok hailed all of the applications as "outstanding work," and Paige said he looked forward to seeing "continuous creativity" in discovering new ways to use technology for improving the lives of children.

George A. Clowes is managing editor of School Reform News. *His email address is* **clowes@heartland.org**.

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Charter Schools Improve Achievement—and Meet Resistance

Teacher union foils charter school expansion in Michigan

by Lisa Snell

New studies suggest that—even with fewer resources at their disposal—charter schools keep pace with, and in some cases outperform, conventional public schools. Despite the improved student achievement and high levels of parental satisfaction, charters continue to face severe resistance in many local school districts.

A July 2003 study by education researchers at the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research compared student achievement in charter schools and regular public schools. The study measured test score improvements in 11 states over a one-year period, finding charter schools slightly outperformed nearby public schools in math and reading.

The researchers took into account the fact that many charter schools target specific populations—such as at-risk students, the disabled, and juvenile delinquents—making it difficult to draw fair comparisons. "Comparing targeted charter schools to regular public schools is like comparing apples to zebras," they note.

"In Michigan, the teacher union appears to have successfully stalled a move to expand charter schools in the state, where more than 12,000 families languish on waiting lists hoping to enroll their children in a charter school."

In an attempt to make an "apples to apples" comparison, the study examined test scores at "untargeted" charter schools and regular public schools that serve similar student populations.

The study's strongest results came in Texas and Florida. In Texas, charter schools achieved year-to-year math and reading score improvements equivalent to a gain of 7 and 8 percentile points from the 50th percentile. In Florida, the charter school improvements in math and reading were equivalent to a gain of 6 percentile points for a student starting at the 50th percentile.

California Charters Keep Pace

A RAND Corporation study, released in June 2003, reviewed educational achievement in California's charter schools. The study found that, despite receiving less funding than regular public schools, the state's charter schools kept pace with, and in some cases outperformed, the conventional public school system.

On average, the RAND report found, "start-up" charters slightly outperform conventional non-charter public schools. "Start-up" charter schools, which comprise about 70 percent of California's charters, start from scratch without the benefit of an existing public school campus or facility.

The RAND study also confirmed that charter schools tend to enroll students who are under-served by the conventional public school system. The California charter schools serve a greater percentage of low-income students than the state's public schools, and a slightly greater percentage of students with academic problems. Also, on a percentage basis, twice as many African-American students attend California charter schools as regular public schools.

In a third study, published in Spring 2003, researchers with the nonprofit Charter School Development Center at California State University, Sacramento determined California charter schools that had been operating for at least five years outperformed non-charter public schools and younger charter schools.

"Dramatic Increases" in New York

In New York, charter schools also are demonstrating positive student achievement growth. According to a draft Five-Year Report by the State Department of Education, charters are outperforming some of their host districts and across the board are demonstrating "dramatic increases" after only two years.

For example, in the 2002-03 school year charter schools have made notable gains on the state performance index. Of 15 charter schools for which Grade 4 testing data are available for both the 2001-02 and 2002-03 school years, 14 showed gains in their performance indexes, with an average gain of more than 30 points. For the 11 districts in which those charter schools are located, nine showed gains in their performance index, with average gains of eight points.

Similarly, test score data for eighth-graders show that, of the four charter schools reporting data for 2001-02 and 2002-03, all made gains on the state performance index, with the average gain being 15 points. By contrast, all three authorizing districts showed declines in performance, with the average loss being five points.

Union Opposition Stalls Growth

Despite the good academic news for California's charter schools, the newly configured Los Angeles Unified School District board—where union-backed members recently gained a majority—is now expressing concern about the long-term impact of the charter school movement on the district.

"Before, when the state was wealthy, you could afford to cut a charter loose and let them do their thing," board member Jon Lauritzen told the *Los Angeles Daily News*. "Now when everybody is cutting their budget, it's hard to tell charters they have full right."

In Michigan, the teacher union appears to have successfully stalled a move to expand charter schools in the state, where more than 12,000 families languish on waiting lists hoping to enroll their children in a charter school. Bob Thompson, a Michigan philanthropist, had offered to invest $200 million to open 15 new charter schools in Detroit.

Although a bipartisan agreement had been reached on an expansion plan, Governor Jennifer Granholm backed away from the agreement after vehement opposition from the Detroit Federation of Teachers, which shut down Detroit schools for a day in protest.

In August, the local media noted the Governor, a Democrat, chose not to send her children to Lansing Public Schools. She sends her two daughters to East Lansing public schools and her son to a private Montessori school.

District Tries to Kill Illinois Charter

In Chicago, the Prairie Crossing Charter School, which ranks in the top 25 schools in Illinois, with 95 percent of its students meeting or exceeding state standards, recently faced a local district campaign to revoke its charter. Officials with Woodland District 50 asked the state board to reject the charter school's renewal application, saying the school has cost the district nearly $2.7 million in state funds since it opened in 1999.

Despite the district protest, the State Board of Education in September voted 6-0 to allow the Prairie Crossing Charter School to receive state funds through the 2008-09 school year.

Lisa Snell directs the education program at the Reason Foundation. Her email address is **lsnell@reason.org**.

Lisa Snell

School Reform News is pleased to welcome Lisa Snell as a contributing editor.

Snell directs the education program at the Reason Foundation, where she oversees research on education issues and has written several policy studies, including "School Vouchers as a Legal Sanction," "Workplace Charter Schools: Florida Blazes the Trail," "Remedial Education Reform," "Innovative School Facility Partnerships," and "Child Welfare Reform and the Role of Privatization."

Snell is a frequent contributor to *Reason* magazine, a monthly columnist for *Privatization Watch*, and a regular contributor to Reason's *Annual Privatization Report*. She also has published numerous articles and op-eds on school choice in such newspapers as the *Las Vegas Review Journal*, *Orange County Register*, and *Los Angeles Daily News*.

Snell frequently comments on school and privatization issues on radio and television. Her broadcast media appearances include the Fox News Channel, ABC's "Wall Street Journal Report," and numerous regional news programs.

Before joining Reason, Snell taught public speaking and argumentation courses at California State University, Fullerton.

INTERNET INFO

The July 2003 Working Paper from the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, "Apples to Apples: An Evaluation of Charter Schools Serving General Student Populations," by Jay P. Greene, Greg Forster, and Marcus A. Winters, is available online from the Institute's Web site at **http://www.manhattan-institute.org/ewp_01.pdf**.

The 2003 RAND study, "Charter School Operations and Performance: Evidence from California," by Ron Zimmer, Richard Buddin, and colleagues, is available from the RAND Web site at **http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR1700**.

The summary report by Michael Agostini from the Charter Schools Development Center, "Veteran Charter Schools Outperform Non-Charters on API," is available from the Center's Web site at **http://www.cacharterschools.org/pdf_files/veteran_API.pdf**

The September 2003 report from the Board of Regents of New York's State Department of Education, "Draft Five-Year Report to the Governor and the Legislature on the Charter School Approach," is available from the Department's Web site at **http://www.regents.nysed.gov/September2003/0903emscvesidd4.htm**.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WORK ETHIC AND THE STUDY ETHIC

AN INTERVIEW WITH

Robert E. Rector

by George A. Clowes

In September, the U.S. Census Bureau's annual poverty and income survey indicated that families headed by a single female were faring much better than anticipated in the current economic downturn. Indeed, following the 1996 welfare reforms, which required many single mothers to work, the poverty level among single parent families reached its lowest level ever in 2000, then increased just slightly over the past two years. Black child poverty reached its lowest point ever in 2001 and was still at its second-lowest level in 2002.

The crafting of the 1996 welfare reform legislation, and the design of welfare provisions of the Republican "Contract With America," owe much to the involvement of Robert E. Rector, senior research fellow in domestic policy studies with The Heritage Foundation. A leading authority on poverty and the U.S. welfare system, Rector has conducted extensive research on the economic costs of welfare and its role in undermining the traditional family structure. He also has studied such related issues as marriage and illegitimacy, and tax reform to assist families.

Rector is the author of *America's Failed $5.4 Trillion War on Poverty*, a comprehensive examination of U.S. welfare programs, and co-editor of *Steering the Elephant: How Washington Works*. His articles have appeared in a variety of publications, including the *Wall Street Journal*, *Los Angeles Times*, *National Review*, *Policy Review*, *Insight*, *Human Events*, and *Harvard Journal on Legislation*. Rector also frequently appears on television and radio.

Prior to joining the Heritage staff, Rector worked as a legislative assistant in the Virginia House of Delegates and as a management analyst at the U.S. Office of Personnel Management. A graduate of the College of William and Mary, he earned his master's degree in political science from Johns Hopkins University. Rector spoke recently with *School Reform News* Managing Editor George Clowes.

Clowes: *What are the major causes of child poverty today, as compared to the 1960s when the War on Poverty was launched?*
Rector: Forty years ago, we had a far less developed economy, and the major reason for child poverty was low parental wages. Today, the overwhelming reasons for child poverty are single parenthood and a lack of parental work. The typical poor family with children today has only about 800 hours of labor during the course of a year. It's lack of parental work, rather than low wages, that is the major reason keeping these families in poverty.

Also, two-thirds of all poor families with children are single-parent families. Since the beginning of the War on Poverty, the out-of-wedlock child-bearing rate has grown from around 7 percent up to 32 percent. That, as well as a growth in divorce, is a huge contributing factor to poverty.

Clowes: *What are the educational consequences of being raised in a single-parent family?*
Rector: You have a compounding effect there, because women who give birth out-of-wedlock in general are poorly educated themselves. Beyond that, children who are raised in single-parent families are more likely to fail in school and are more likely to drop out. Then they, in turn, are more likely to have children out-of-wedlock, and perpetuate the cycle.

"Today, the overwhelming reasons for child poverty are single parenthood and a lack of parental work."

It's important to understand that this is not a causal thing: Poverty does not cause a low level of education. In fact, a low education level is more likely to be contributing to the poverty than vice versa.

One way to think about this is to realize that, back in the 1920s, probably half of all Americans were poor. In the 1950s, it was around a quarter. Although these families were poor, it didn't reduce their cognitive abilities, it didn't erode their work ethic, and it didn't make them more likely to be engaged in crime.

There's a fundamental social science error when you take a cross-sectional viewpoint at any point in time and say, "Aha! Look—people who are poor are more likely to do all of these things. And therefore, if we could just artificially raise their income, they would do drugs less, drop out of school less, have fewer children out-of-wedlock, work more, and do better in school." It doesn't work like that.

Once you look at it in a historical sense, it's quite clear that income status, for example, doesn't have very much to do with completing high school, because a lot of children from very low-income fam-

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ilies completed high school in the 1950s. Rather, it's the study ethic and the work ethic that young people have that contributes to their success in school and in the workplace. In fact, efforts in welfare to artificially raise income actually erode that work ethic and erode the individual's sense of the importance of getting an education to support themselves.

Clowes: *What happened that changed the study ethic and the work ethic?*
Rector: What you see, moving from the 1950s forward, are changes in a wide range of social norms, concerning work, criminal behavior, respect for authority, education, sexual activity, and marriage. You see an expansion of what I would call "the culture of the underclass." That culture tends to have negative attitudes about work, about education, about marriage, and about self-control. It became cool to be sexually active without marriage and to have children without being married. Working at a reasonable job was considered to be the action of a chump, being a husband and supporting your family was being a chump, and clearly studying in school was being a chump.

Now, all of those attitudes existed in society prior to that point in time, but in the late 1960s, those values clearly exploded. In particular, there was a huge change in the norms concerning sexual behavior. In low-income, black communities it became commonplace that women would have children and not be married, and would support those children through welfare rather than through a husband.

Welfare provided a mother and her children with an income independent of a father. But once the role of the breadwinner and the husband disappeared, a lot of the rationale for the male work ethic and the male study ethic also disappeared.

If you're not academically gifted, one of the main reasons you're sitting in a classroom, slugging away, is the idea that you have to do reasonably well in school in order to get a good job and have a wife and support a family. But if you're no longer thinking about having a wife and supporting a family, then school work doesn't have much purpose, and getting and holding on to a job has far less purpose.

Clowes: *So a prospective father-in-law no longer asks, "Can you support my daughter?"*
Rector: Well, he's not around any more, either. There's a complete vacuum of responsible male authority figures in a lot of these low-income communities. This isn't an issue that's restricted to blacks; it's just most pronounced in black communities. The same pattern occurs with low-income whites.

The change in the male work ethic and the male study ethic also was tied in with a certain current of radical feminism, which actively celebrated the disappearance of marriage in the black community, and said it was better for women not to have husbands but instead to have loose, cohabitational relationships. This sounds insane in retrospect, but it was very avant-garde thought in the early 1970s.

They wanted to wipe the married family off the map, and in some respects, they've succeeded. It's just such a bizarrely counterproductive idea that it's difficult to understand it today, but book after book after book was written by feminists on this subject—quite paradoxically, celebrating what most Americans regarded as a disaster, which was the disappearance of marriage in the black community.

Clowes: *Something that Daniel Moynihan also had pointed out.*
Rector: Right. But the napalming of Moynihan by the black left, the radical left, and the feminist left is very symptomatic of this whole issue. It was impossible for almost 25 years to talk about the collapse of marriage as it related to poverty, the underclass, and welfare. It was just politically incorrect to do so, even though it was quite obvious to anyone looking at these things that that was the predominant factor behind welfare dependence and child poverty.

"[I]n the 1920s, probably half of all Americans were poor. In the 1950s, it was around a quarter. Although these families were poor, it didn't reduce their cognitive abilities, it didn't erode their work ethic, and it didn't make them more likely to be engaged in crime."

Clowes: *Are there any relatively modest public policy changes that could significantly reduce child poverty?*
Rector: Two things have to be done in order to reduce child poverty in this country: Increase the work rate of parents, and increase the marriage rate.

If, for example, all of the families with poor children work for 2,000 hours a year—that's one adult working 40 hours a week throughout the year—child poverty would be reduced by three-quarters. You'd virtually wipe out child poverty with that one change alone.

Secondly, if the women who have children out-of-wedlock married the father of their children, again about 75 percent of children would be immediately raised up out of poverty.

Now the question is: What can you do in public policy to increase the marriage rate and increase the work rate? To increase the work rate, we need to put work requirements onto all of the welfare programs that affect families with children. Right now, there are modest work requirements in the TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) program and they need to be strengthened. There are none in food stamps, and there are none in public housing. What we've learned from the 1996 welfare reform is that if you require a parent to get a job or to prepare for work as a condition of receiving assistance, that has a very significant effect in increasing real employment and in reducing poverty.

In terms of promoting marriage, that's more a cutting-edge issue. We're just starting to think about doing that. But clearly, this is an area where a number of policies—education about the value of marriage, education about relationship skills, and reducing some of the current penalties against marriage in welfare—all could be significant factors in very greatly increasing the rate of marriage in our society. Also, marriage skills training—educating couples on how to resolve fights, how not to escalate fights, and how to communicate—can be effective in reducing the divorce rate, which is another entryway into single parenthood.

Clowes: *Explicit sex education in K-12 schools has been promoted as a means of reducing out-of-wedlock births. Has it been effective?*
Rector: It's not really sex education, it's condom promotion, or safe sex education. Those programs may have some effect in reducing pregnancy—largely because they have a lot of material about venereal diseases that's kind of scary, and that might move young people to be either a little less sexually active or to use contraception a little bit more—but it's marginal, In general, those programs are sending a very clear message that society both expects and condones sexual activity in the early teen years. That's the wrong message to send.

In general, if you want to reduce teen pregnancy, delaying the onset of sexual activity is much more effective than contraceptive use. For example, if you could shift up by two years the age at which young people become sexually active, you would cut the teen pregnancy rate in half.

More importantly, though, most out-of-wedlock childbearing does not occur in the teen years. It mostly occurs in the early 20s, with only about 15 percent of all out-of-wedlock births occurring to women under age 18. So this is mainly an issue of a crisis in the relationship between young adults. Clearly, in that context, handing teenagers condoms and saying, "Be careful when you're fooling around," isn't going to help matters very much.

What is needed instead is education that will attempt to teach young people the importance of fidelity, of commitment, of long-term life goals, of love and intimacy. Promoting condoms doesn't do that. What you see is that girls who become sexually active early on tend to develop a pattern of broken relationships that they carry with them through their whole lives. A girl who had been sexually active in her mid- and early teens is far less likely to have a stable marriage when she's in her 30s. Early sexual activity has a negative effect in terms of relationship structure that will last a lifetime.

That's one of the things we ought to be teaching. We should be teaching young people that those who are sexually active are far more likely to attempt suicide, they're more likely to be depressed, they're more likely to have all of these negative long-term effects that are not going to be cured by using a condom. This is the kind of message that needs to be sent out, and this is the kind of message that abstinence education has. Unfortunately, it's only through these tiny little abstinence programs that young people are being taught anything truthful about sex at all. Certainly, they're getting the opposite message through the media, and they're not getting very much of a message at home, either.

Parents can have a huge effect in reducing teen sexual activity, but somehow they think that if they set a strong moral message, they will be ignored. The data suggest otherwise—that, in fact, teens will follow the norms that are set for them. Parents should be much more explicit and much firmer in the norms they're setting.

Our society is not setting good norms for our children. We need to have a solid abstinence message in all of our schools. Those abstinence programs should teach young people the relationship between their current sexual activity and what's going to happen to them across the course of their lifetime. They need to know that sexual activity today has long-term effects, that the choices they're making now have psychological effects that endure a lifetime.

Finally, we should really make an effort to make the national media clean up its message. It's absolutely scandalous that we let the music industry and television saturate young people with very negative messages. Any parent who allows a child to watch MTV has got to be crazy. Certainly, we could, as a society, put pressure on those media that are focused almost exclusively on young people to clean up the messages they're sending.

We have a strong precedent in our society for collectively controlling the messages that go to young people in a very constructive and positive way. For example, that was done with the comic industry in the 1950s, where comic books were clearly sending alarming messages and the industry cleaned itself up as a result of public pressure. We need to put pressure on the music industry and television to clean up their acts, too.

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Union

Continued from page 1

Department of Justice to initiate criminal action against the NEA for violating federal laws that address the filing and reporting of information about the union's spending on political activities.

"Politics is one of the teachers' union's primary functions—and yet the union tells the government that it spends absolutely nothing on campaign activities," declared Landmark President Mark R. Levin, saying it was time for union officials to be held "accountable." Landmark Legal Foundation is a nonprofit public interest law firm.

As a tax-exempt organization, the NEA is not required to pay taxes on the dues it receives from members—unless the funds are spent to influence the election or defeat of candidates. If tax-exempt funds are spent on political activities, the amounts must be reported to the IRS and are subject to taxation.

After examining the NEA's tax returns and analyzing internal planning and budget documents, Landmark concluded the teacher union had concealed from the IRS political expenditures involving tens of millions of dollars of tax-exempt dues.

"The complaints we filed today show, in meticulous detail, how the nation's largest, most powerful and most political union has flagrantly ignored its tax obligations," explained Levin. "We have given the IRS and the Justice Department a step by step roadmap to investigate the NEA and, where warranted, pursue criminal charges."

INTERNET INFO

Landmark has filed earlier complaints about the NEA's unreported political expenditures with the U.S. Department of Labor, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Federal Election Commission.

"Union Hid Political Spending, Suit Charges," School Reform News, July 2002, **http://www.heartland.org/Article.cfm?artId=881**.

"Union Called Shots on Democrats' Agenda," School Reform News, September 2001, **http://www.heartland.org/Article.cfm?artId=10190**.

"Teacher Union Denies Political Activities to IRS," School Reform News, September 2000, **http://www.heartland.org/Article.cfm?artId=10924**.

National Network

The Landmark complaint points out the NEA makes substantial outlays—$73.7 million in 1998-99 and $76.4 million in 1999-2000—to support a national network of some 1,800 local administrators. That network provides the teacher union's national office with a link to its 13,000 local affiliates and the ability to coordinate political activities into an integrated and unified operation that reaches every congressional district in the country. Although these local administrators, called UniServ directors, are employed by a local NEA affiliate, they are selected, trained, and funded primarily by the NEA.

"The NEA UniServ funding agreements between the NEA and the state associations, and between the state and local associations, emphasize the political responsibilities of UniServ directors. These responsibilities include directing local association political activities ..." explained Education Policy Institute Chairman Myron Lieberman in his 1997 book, *The Teacher Unions*.

"NEA-PAC guidelines also recommend that UniServ directors participate in the interview of candidates for elective office," Lieberman continued. "Because of their training, longevity, and the fact that they are the custodians of the union's political memory, the UniServ directors play a major role in all political activities at the local level."

Lieberman's view is underscored by a statement from the NEA's federal policy manager, Randall J. Moody, who told political workshops at the union's 2003 national convention: "Politics move our policy. We work through UniServ."

Coordinated Political Campaign

Landmark contends that in the 1996 campaign cycle the NEA engaged in a coordinated political campaign to elect specific Democratic candidates, working with various political organizations including the Democratic National Committee. Although a nonprofit organization can be active in get-out-the-vote campaigns, such activities must be strictly nonpartisan. They violate the IRS code when they are specifically identified with a particular candidate or party, as the NEA activities were.

Another example of an unreported political expenditure cited by Landmark is $9.6 million in the NEA's 1996 Strategic Focus Plan to "build bipartisan constituencies among those running for and elected to public office ..."

Some of the activities funded by that appropriation included "screening candidates for federal office; ... mobilize members and other resources ... to support the election of pro-education candidates and ballot measures; provide technical assistance, surveys and training in political campaign work to affiliates and members at all levels; identify and evaluate new/innovative ways to affect election results ..."

George A. Clowes is managing editor of School Reform News. *His email address is* **clowes@heartland.org**.

More Teacher Union Scandals

by George A. Clowes

On the heels of a scandal involving the misappropriation of more than $5 million by officials of the Washington, DC Teachers Union (WTU), another scandal has been uncovered involving the fraudulent conversion of almost $3.5 million in union funds for the personal use of former United Teachers of Dade (UTD) president Pat Tornillo.

In late August, Tornillo resigned his long-time position with UTD and pled guilty to stealing union funds, promising to pay back $640,000 while facing tax charges and penalties of about $400,000, and up to 30 months in prison. A forensic audit conducted by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) detailed how $3,356,744 of UTD funds was "either misappropriated, diverted, and/or used for the personal benefit of Mr. Pat L. Tornillo, Jr., Mr. Murray Sisselman, Elizabeth Du Fresne and other individuals."

While not reading "like the manifest of a pirate ship"—which is how one reporter described a listing of the expensive clothing, silver, artwork, and electronics items purchased by WTU officials—the forensic audit suggests Tornillo and his colleagues used teacher union dues to lead the kind of carefree, luxurious lifestyle the UTD teachers who furnished those dues can only dream about:

- travel, often involving cruises, to Russia, China, the Orient, New Zealand, Puerto Rico, St. Kitts, St. Barts, and Paris;
- use of paid UTD staff to carry out household tasks and duties at the Tornillo residence, and for a personal assistant to Tornillo's wife;
- personal expenditures of $677,793 charged to UTD credit cards and not reimbursed, including $71,430 to Seabourn Cruise Lines to Southeast Asia, and $20,056 to the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Miami;
- payment of all Tornillo's household utilities, insurance, and services, including gas, water, electricity, cable television, telephone, gardener, appliance maintenance plan, pool maintenance, and exterminator.

Former UTD president Pat Tornillo

As well as seeking restitution of the misappropriated funds, the AFT has instituted a number of reforms aimed at restructuring UTD in a way that would allow it to repay all outstanding debt.

... And Another

In September, auditors from the American Federation of Teachers were called in to examine the books of the New Hampshire Federation of Teachers (NHFT), according to Mike Antonucci of the Education Intelligence Agency. Three top elected NHFT officials had resigned earlier in the month, apparently over questions regarding "improprieties" in the spending of funds from a labor-management grant from the U.S. Department of Labor that partnered the union with a local school district.

... And Another

Antonucci also reports that the Lamoille Union High School District in Vermont placed teacher Wayne Nadeau on paid leave in September, pending a final school board decision on his employment.

At the National Education Association's (NEA) national convention in July, Nadeau was elected to a six-year term on the teacher union's Executive Committee, securing votes from more than 4,700 delegates, who apparently were unaware Nadeau's teaching license had been suspended for 20 working days earlier this year for having sex with a teacher's aide in his classroom.

When Nadeau's admitted involvement in the incident was revealed in Vermont newspapers shortly after the convention, the teacher union initially supported him. For example, NEA spokesperson Kathleen Lyons pointed out Nadeau had been disciplined and that "Having an affair is not a disqualification." But, under pressure, Nadeau resigned from the NEA Executive Committee in late July.

George A. Clowes is managing editor of School Reform News. *His email address is* **clowes@heartland.org**.

INTERNET INFO

The September 3, 2003 forensic audit of the financial records of the United Teachers of Dade, prepared for the American Federation of Teachers, is available online at the Miami union's Web site at **http://www.utd.org/Forensic_Examination_Report.htm**.

The December 18, 2002 FBI affidavit regarding the Washington Teachers Union, listing the merchandise alleged to have been purchased with teacher union funds, is available on the Web site of DC Watch at **http://www.dcwatch.com/schools/ps021218.htm**.

Mike Antonucci's informative weekly *Communiqué*, detailing teacher union activities in communities across the nation, is available via email from the Education Intelligence Agency at **http://www.eiaonline.com**.

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Pittsburgh's Schools Need "Drastic Reform," Says Commission

Call for putting mayor in charge

by George A. Clowes

Pittsburgh will not have a high-performance school district without fundamental structural change in the way its public schools are governed, a citizen commission concluded in September after a nine-month investigation of student performance, finances, and governance in the Pittsburgh Public School District.

Despite having a low pupil-teacher ratio, highly experienced teachers, high per-pupil spending, and the highest teacher salaries in the nation, the district continues to maintain "alarmingly low math and reading achievement scores" and is in "overall academic peril," the commission concluded.

"Bold solutions and fundamental change are necessary to achieve excellence in the Pittsburgh Public Schools, offer all students the opportunity of an enriching education, and brighten the city's future," the commission declared in its Final Report, called "Keeping the Promise." In the commission's view, the present governance structure of the city's public schools—where board members are elected by geographic areas—produces ongoing leadership problems and contributes to high costs, high taxes, neglect of poor student performance, and widespread inequity.

The 38-member Commission on Public Education, consisting of large and small employers, educators, legal experts, clergy, and parents, was established in September 2002 by Mayor Tom Murphy. The mayor's action followed an unprecedented announcement by Pittsburgh philanthropic groups that they would cease further funding of public education projects in the city until the district's "bickering, distrust, and chaotic decision making" had been replaced by "an effective management and governance structure." (See "The Friedman Report: Foundations Apply New Dynamic to Education Reform," *School Reform News*, October 2002.)

The mayor's commission concluded the key to success is the school board. What Pittsburgh and its children deserve, said the Commission, is a Board of Education that not only "reflects the city's racial, geographic, and economic diversity" but also is "steeped in expertise and committed to a high standard of academic performance and sound management of finances and facilities."

Improving student performance is possible, continued the commission, "but only with the unified sense of purpose, discipline, and consistency over many years that only a carefully appointed Board of Education can provide." Such a board should not be elected but should be appointed by the mayor, the commission recommended.

While asserting mayor-appointed school boards "have proven successful in other large cities," the commission's report provides no support for that claim. The report does provide a classification of school board governance structures around the country, together with a brief description of how each district operates.

By-District Elections:
Houston, Pittsburgh, Portland, San Diego, Seattle.

At-Large Elections:
Cincinnati, Minneapolis, Sacramento, St. Louis.

Hybrid At-Large/By-District Elections:
Atlanta, Charlotte-Mecklenberg, Denver, Kansas City (Missouri), Milwaukee, Tampa.

Mayor-Appointed:
Cleveland.

Mayor-Appointed/Elected Hybrids:
Oakland (California), Washington, DC.

Mayor and State Appointments:
Baltimore, Detroit, Philadelphia.

Strong Mayor:
Boston, Chicago, New York City.

INTERNET INFO

The full report of the Commission on Public Education, "Keeping the Promise: The Case for Reform in the Pittsburgh Public Schools," is available at the Education Commission's Web site at: **http://www.educationcommission.org/KeepingthePromise-Full.pdf**

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As Physical Exercise Declines, Childhood Obesity Soars

Should schools play a more active role in prevention?

by Mike Scott

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports more than 15 percent of children aged 16 to 19 are overweight, a number that has doubled in the past two decades. At the same time, many school districts across the country have de-emphasized physical education classes.

Research shows 60 percent of overweight 5- to 10-year-old children already have at least one risk factor for heart disease, including elevated blood pressure or insulin levels. Although evaluation and treatment of obesity in childhood offer the best hope for preventing disease progression with its associated morbidities into adulthood, how far should schools go in helping curb childhood obesity?

The American lifestyle of convenience produces fewer opportunities in daily life to burn calories: Children watch more television; many neighborhoods lack sidewalks; household chores are assisted by labor-saving machinery. Diet also has changed: We're eating larger portions of less-healthy food than ever before.

The results are very noticeable. In Michigan, for example, more than a quarter of children aged 6-11 are obese, or extremely overweight. Among those aged 12-17, 25 percent of girls and 18 percent of boys are obese. School officials in Arkansas are planning to provide parents with "health report cards" in an attempt to identify extremely overweight children and the health risks they face.

In 2001, the U.S. Surgeon General released a "Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity." The study warned physical inactivity has become a nationwide epidemic.

The Surgeon General, Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and National Association for Sport and Physical Education all have recommended a minimum of 30 minutes of physical education every school day for every elementary and secondary school student.

"As physical education classes have declined, technology, behavior, and nutritional habits have changed to allow a more sedentary lifestyle," said Jenni Gaster Sopko, public relations manager for the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA).

"We urge all our local PTAs to support daily physical education programs as an integral part of children's education," added Sopko.

Parent Concerns

A recent survey from the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) indicates parents who are concerned about escalating childhood obesity rates and the rise of Type II diabetes see daily physical activity as key to optimal health and academic success. More than 76 percent of these parents think more school physical education could help control or prevent childhood obesity.

NASPE has developed a set of guidelines to help principals, teachers, and parents better assess whether school programs would promote a healthier lifestyle. The list identifies formal instruction from an accredited professional, providing adequate equipment, safe indoor and outdoor facilities, and a developed, sequential curriculum as necessities for any physical education program.

"We want parents asking about their child's physical education. Oftentimes they don't think about it," said Paula Kun, spokesperson for the American Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.

"All our research shows people more physically active can better prevent obesity," Kun added. "But children need to be taught how and why to be physically fit and that is something that should be a part of the curriculum."

Daily Activity at Sherrills Ford

At Sherrills Ford Elementary School near Charlotte, North Carolina, physical education is considered an integral part of every child's learning experience, according to physical education instructor Russ Darden.

"We strive to justify physical education daily here at Sherrills Ford," said Darden, who incorporates many activities into his program, from juggling to hula-hooping to general health education.

Darden utilizes the health and physical education concepts recommended by the Healthful Living Education program. Developed by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, the program promotes behaviors that contribute to a healthful lifestyle and improved quality of life for all students.

"My goal for all my students is for them to take a small piece of the Sherrills Ford physical education experience and apply it in their adult years," said Darden. "That includes healthy ways of eating and the importance of exercise. Children need to know why the activities they participate in here will help them long-term. It's not just about having fun, although that is an important by-product."

Mike Scott is a freelance writer who lives in Michigan and writes frequently on education issues. His email address is **mascott17@aol.com**.

School Meals and Fat Content

Schools in New York City recently began to offer a free breakfast to every student to help improve student achievement. Menus include doughnuts, buttermilk biscuits, French toast with syrup, and croissants with melted cheese.

On the other coast, schools in California will likely soon be barred from offering soft drinks for sale in elementary and junior high schools. According to the California Center for Public Health Advocacy, more than one in four of California's children are overweight.

The nutritional quality of food served in schools was the subject of a May 2003 report from the General Accounting Office, which examined school lunches. The auditors found schools had reduced the average proportion of calories from fat in school lunches from 38 percent to 34 percent. However, three-quarters of the schools had not achieved the required rate of just 30 percent.

In addition, the report found school lunches contained too much salt and too much calcium. Although the study showed most teachers provide nutrition education to K-5 students, the auditors also noted the lessons were "not enough to show an impact on children's behavior."

INTERNET INFO

The May 2003 report GAO-03-506 from the General Accounting Office, "School Lunch Program: Efforts Needed to Improve Nutrition and Encourage Healthy Eating," is available online at **http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d03506.pdf**.

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What Lessons Should Sports Teach Our Youth?

by Mike Scott

What appears to be a growing number of incidents of violence by student-athletes, parents, and coaches directed at other athletes or officials has caused many sports organizations to develop programs that avoid the sense of extreme competition that some players, parents, and coaches bring to their games.

In the summer of 2001, the National Alliance for Youth Sports (NAYS) hosted the first National Summit on Raising Community Standards in Children's Sports, bringing together representatives from recreation agencies and school districts to devise a strategy for changing the culture of children's sports while preserving the value of participation.

"People don't realize how many of these incidents occur around the country," said Fred Engh, president of NAYS. "These aren't isolated situations."

In addition to reducing violent situations, parents who concentrate on the positive aspects of athletics set a better example and often help their children to succeed even more in sports. NAYS cites research showing athletes of all ages improve more with positive reinforcement on skill development than with negative criticism.

Does this mean competition in sports should be de-emphasized? After all, real life does reward "winners," something children will learn once they enter the workforce.

Basketball coach Robert Rogers believes it is possible to de-emphasize winning and losing at the younger levels but sees more benefits than drawbacks for intense athletic competition in middle and high school. Rogers has coached boys' basketball in the Detroit area at all age levels. As the varsity head coach at Pontiac Northern High School, he has taken his squad to three consecutive Class A semifinals and two state championships.

"I don't know why we would have to change anything at that level," he said. "You have the opportunity for young men and women to earn college scholarships where everything is competitive anyway, including the classroom where you have tests graded on a curve."

All students need to learn what it feels like to win and lose, said Rogers.

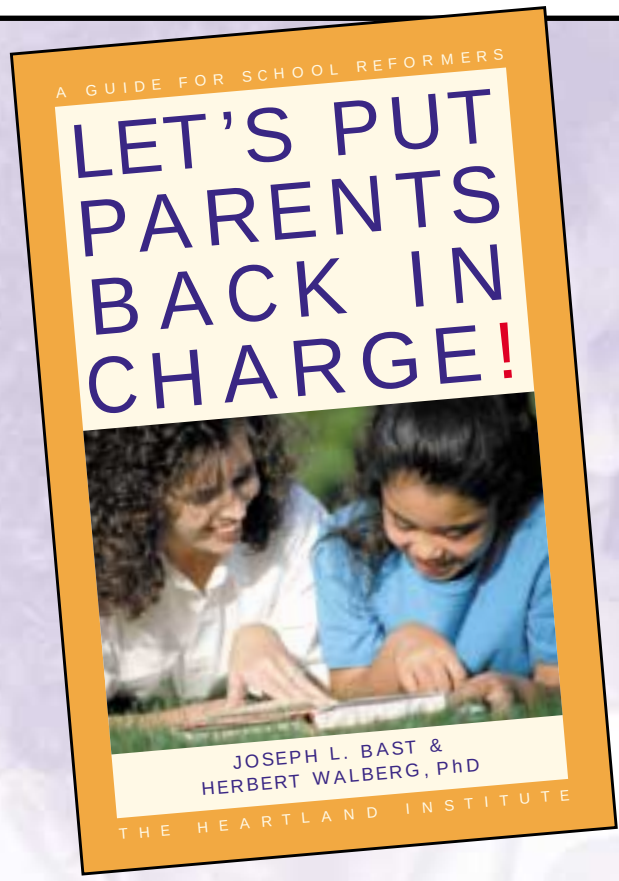
"You can't shelter kids. Maybe we can put in rules in elementary school programs where kids have to play a minimum number of minutes in a sport, but I'm not sure what other options we have."

But Marlyn Goldhammer, executive director of the South Dakota High School Activities Association, argues a good athletics program will teach boys and girls the importance of physical activity, the basics of a particular sport, and ways to improve performance, teamwork, and individual confidence. Winning, he says, is merely a by-product ... but it has been taken to a level where it is seen as more important than the lessons themselves.

"Somehow or another, those of us in charge of the interscholastic program have gradually allowed the goals and objectives to focus more on winning than participation," said Goldhammer.

"It is undisputed that interscholastic athletics and fine arts activities are vital parts of the total educational experience of students," he said. "But we are at a point where we need to remind ourselves of the primary goals and objectives for sponsoring school sports. In that regard, we need to eliminate the over-emphasis on winning and concentrate more on character development and the values needed to become a successful person."

Mike Scott is a freelance writer who lives in Michigan and writes frequently on education issues. His email address is **mascott17@aol.com**.



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